

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

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1. A purified *NIT1* gene.
 2. The gene of claim 1 which is a human gene.
 3. The gene of claim 1 which is a mammalian gene.
 - 10 4. A purified Nit1 protein.
 5. The protein of claim 4 which is a human protein.
 6. A purified protein encoded by a nucleic acid having a
15 nucleotide sequence consisting of the coding region of SEQ ID NO:1.
 7. An antibody which is capable of binding a Nit1 protein.
 8. The antibody of claim 7 which is monoclonal.
 - 20 9. A molecule comprising a fragment of the antibody of claim 7, which fragment is capable of binding a Nit1 protein.
 10. An isolated nucleic acid of less than 100 kb, comprising a
25 nucleotide sequence encoding a Nit1 protein.
 - Sub D³ 11. ~~The nucleic acid of claim 10 in which the Nit1 protein is a human Nit1 protein.~~
 - 30 12. A pharmaceutical composition comprising a therapeutically effective amount of a Nit1 protein; and a therapeutically acceptable carrier.

13. A method of treating or preventing a disease or disorder in a subject comprising administering to said subject a therapeutically effective amount of a molecule that inhibits Nit1 function.

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14. A method of treating or preventing a disease or disorder in a subject comprising administering to said subject a therapeutically effective amount of a molecule that enhances Nit1 function.

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15. A method of diagnosing or screening for the presence of or a predisposition for developing a disease or disorder in a subject comprising detecting one or more mutations in *NIT1* DNA, RNA or Nit1 protein derived from the subject in which the presence of said one or more mutations indicates the presence of the disease or disorder or a predisposition for developing the disease or disorder.

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16. A method of treating or preventing a disease or disorder in a subject by using a vector containing the *NIT1* gene coding sequence.

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